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The situation in the Middle East

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Fifty-fifth year

Letter dated 17 October 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you the attached statement by President William Clinton on the occasion of the conclusion of the Middle East Peace Summit at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the statement circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 40, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Richard C. **Holbrooke**

* Reissued for technical reasons.

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Annex to the letter dated 17 October 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

President Clinton: First of all, I want to thank President Mubarak and his able team for making it possible for us to have this meeting that we have held in this magnificent and beautiful place. I especially want to thank President Mubarak for Egypt's consistent and pivotal partnership in the peace process and for playing a critical role in our efforts here. I also want to thank His Majesty King Abdullah for his steadfast leadership for peace, which again was in evidence.

I would like to thank the European Union High Commissioner Javier Solana, my longtime friend, who worked with me to bring an end to violence in the Balkans, and now is working in the Middle East. And especially I want to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who has been here now in the region for more than a week, and who has worked tirelessly to bring an end to violence and to make this meeting possible.

But of course, the greatest credit for the progress we have made today belongs to Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat, who have had to overcome the difficulties of these past several days. And we all recognize that theirs was the primary decision to make.

Our meeting has not been easy because the past two weeks have been so hard: a tragic and terrible confrontation costing many lives and injuries, threatening everything that we have worked to achieve between Israelis and Palestinians and throughout the region over the past seven years.

Even as we meet, the situation in the territories remains tense. Yesterday again was violent.

This is a reminder of the urgency of breaking the cycle of violence. I believe we have made real progress today. Repairing the damage will take time and great effort by all of us.

When we leave here today, we will have to work hard to consolidate what we have agreed. Let me summarize what has been agreed so that there will be no misunderstanding.

Our primary objective has been to end the current violence so we can begin again to resume our efforts towards peace. The leaders have agreed on the three basic objectives and steps to realize them.

First, both sides have agreed to issue public statements unequivocally calling for an end to violence. They have also agreed to take immediate, concrete measures to end the current confrontation, eliminate points of friction, ensure an end to violence and incitement, maintain calm and prevent a recurrence of recent events.

To accomplish this, both sides will act immediately to return the situation to that which existed prior to the current crisis, in areas such as restoring law and order, redeployment of forces, eliminating points of friction, enhancing security cooperation and ending the closure and opening the Gaza airport. The United States will facilitate security cooperation between the parties as needed.

Secondly, the United States will develop with the Israelis and Palestinians, as well as in consultation with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, a committee of fact-finding on the events of the past several weeks and how to prevent their recurrence. The committee's report will be shared by the President of the United States with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the parties prior to publication. A final report shall be submitted under the auspices of the United States President for publication.

Thirdly, if we are to address the underlying roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there must be a pathway back to negotiations and a resumption of efforts to reach a permanent status agreement based upon Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and subsequent understandings. Towards this end, the leaders have agreed that the United States would consult with the parties within the next two weeks about how to move forward.

We have made important commitments here today against a backdrop of tragedy and crisis. We should have no illusions about the difficulties ahead.

If we are going to rebuild confidence and trust, we must all do our part, avoiding recrimination and moving forward. I am counting on each of us to do everything we possibly can in the critical period ahead.